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Chairman: Ms. Wensley ..... (Australia)
Chairman of the Adivsory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 121: Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (*continued*) (A/54/6/Rev.1, A/54/7 and A/54/16)

First reading (continued)

Section 16. Economic and social development in Africa (continued)

Section 17. Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific (continued)

Section 18. Economic development in Europe (continued)

Section 19. Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean (continued)

Section 20. Economic and social development in Western Asia (continued)

1. **Mr. Fox** (Australia), speaking on sections 16 to 20 of the proposed programme budget, said that his delegation valued the work of the regional commissions. All of the commissions, with the exception of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, had sought additional resources for the biennium 2000-2001. Given that those additional resources were extremely modest, representing about 0.1 to 0.5 per cent of the budgets of the commissions, his delegation considered that the additional funds required should instead be found through management improvement, efficiency gains or redeployment of resources.

2. His delegation had previously expressed support for resource growth of almost 15 per cent under section 10 (Africa: New Agenda for Development). Some delegations had stated that still more resources were required in order to address the daunting development needs of Africa. While his delegation had some sympathy for that position, it did not consider that allocating additional funds to the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), which was in the midst of a reform process, represented the best solution. Moreover, it was incumbent on those who called for additional resources to identify where those resources should be found.

3. He noted with concern that some regional commissions spent as much as 50 per cent of their budgets on programme support. His delegation shared the hope expressed by ACABQ (A/54/7, para. V.15) that, as more modern technology and innovations were applied to automate support activities, more resources would be released to substantive activities. The regional commissions should, however, have committed themselves to a timetable for reform, indicating how and when they would improve the ratio of programme support to programme of work. If investment was already being made in information technology, the savings realized should be clearly indicated.

4. His delegation shared the concerns of ACABQ regarding the proliferation of liaison offices and agreed that, while the level of resources devoted to such offices was considerable, it was not clear in some cases what was actually being accomplished. It noted the Advisory Committee's regret (A/54/7, para. 107) at the Secretariat's failure to provide a substantive response to those concerns. There was a need to ensure, when proposals for new or expanded liaison offices were considered, that the potential of modern communication technology was fully realized. His delegation would have difficulty supporting any requests for additional resources by liaison offices without having had the benefit of the review called for by ACABQ.

5. His delegation shared the concern expressed at the high vacancy rates in the regional commissions. It would like to have clarification regarding the funding of the Regional Commissions New York Office.

6. **Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria) recalled that development in Africa was one of the priorities of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001. His delegation considered that budget discipline, which it had always advocated, meant focusing resources on those priority areas. It was time to replace empty rhetoric with a genuine commitment to make available to the African continent the resources it needed to tackle the enormous challenges it faced.

7. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that funding for the Regional Commissions New York Office was proposed under section 16B. Real resource growth of 0.2 per cent was proposed for part V, which was in line with the rate of growth for the programme budget as a whole. Thus, the priority assigned to the regional commissions had neither increased nor diminished in relation to other budget sections.

8. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider section 19 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001. In that connection she drew the Committee's attention to the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination contained in paragraph 322 of its report (A/54/16).

9. **Mr. Jara** (Chile) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made previously by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; it attached great importance to the work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in particular its activities connected with regional and global integration. The budget proposals for ECLAC were generally consistent with the revised medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 and with the mandate agreed by its members at the Commission's twenty-seventh session.

10. His delegation attached fundamental importance to the provision of sufficient resources for the full implementation of programme 17 of the medium-term plan on economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean. It welcomed in particular the inclusion of the new subprogramme 12 (Mainstreaming the gender perspective into regional development), the full integration of the Latin American and Caribbean Centre for Demography (CELADE) into the ECLAC organizational structure, and the reorganization of the Division of Environment and Development into two smaller divisions. It also attached great importance to the pilot management programme and would welcome further information on its implementation.

11. **Mr. Herrera** (Mexico) said that the work of ECLAC was of fundamental importance because of its outstanding contribution to the solution of the region's problems. His delegation was happy to note the 0.4 per cent increase in the resources requested and the Commission's continued effort to improve administrative efficiency. It looked forward in particular to the report on the pilot management plan.

12. **Ms. Guy** (Trinidad and Tobago) said that her delegation concurred with the positions expressed previously on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and supported the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) on section 19. ECLAC played an important role in the region's social and economic development, and adequate resources should be provided to enable the Commission to implement all its mandated activities under programme 17 of the medium-term plan.

13. Her delegation lauded the Commission's vision as outlined in paragraphs 19.5 to 19.9 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (A/54/6/Rev.1). It noted the references to worrisome structural problems and for the need to single out social equity, but was puzzled by the statement in paragraph 19.10 that the programme budget proposal was inspired by the objective of getting the most value from the expected level of resource allocation. She asked whether there was a pre-set level of resources which determined what was proposed in the budget and, if so, what the legislative mandate was for such an approach.

14. Many of the countries of the region, especially the smaller ones, benefited from the output of subprogramme ! (Linkages with the global economy, competitiveness and production specialization). Any reduction in the level of resources for the subprogramme would further marginalize already vulnerable small countries. It was widely accepted that special consideration should be given to small States, and her delegation would therefore welcome information from the Secretariat about the resources allocated in the ECLAC budget for activities related to such States. A reduction of approximately 33.1 per cent in the level of resources for subprogramme 1 was significant. Further information would also be welcome on the level of resources for the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

15. Her delegation commended ECLAC for the prompt inclusion of the new subprogramme 12 but noted that its implementation would rely mainly on an internal reallocation of resources and that subprogramme 5 (Social development and social equity) had therefore suffered a cut of about 22.5 per cent, even though social equity was described as deserving to be singled out. That anomaly was directly related to the inadequacy of the aggregate level of resources, which must be increased.

16. In view of the important role of the Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee (CDCC), her delegation requested details of the resources allocated to the ECLAC subregional office for the Caribbean, which served as the CDCC secretariat. Resources should be proposed for activities in all subregions

ravaged by natural disasters, and such activities should extend to the assessment of the socio-economic impact of the disasters.

17. **Mr. Toscano** (Ecuador) said that his delegation supported the statement made previously by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It believed that ECLAC was a most important tool for the region since it was responsible for implementing programme 17 of the medium-term plan, which was one of the pillars of the international agenda of the countries of the region. It also supported the reform and modernization of the Commission, for increased administrative efficiency would enable it to resume its role as a centre of academic excellence for dealing with the region's priority problems. The reform process had produced its first results, in particular a report on the effects of several natural disasters which had devastated the coastline of Ecuador and other countries.

18. The Commission's assistance was also decisive for the negotiations on the free trade zone of the Americas, where the experience gained could be used in the negotiations with the European Union and in the process of regional integration. Its technical assistance would also be crucial with respect to programmes to ease the impact of the external debt of the countries of the region. ECLAC's activities therefore warranted support. In that connection the resources requested represented, to say the least, the minimum necessary amount.

19. **Mr. Den Hartog** (Brazil) said that his delegation joined with other delegations in strongly supporting the work of the regional commissions and it endorsed the statement made by Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It was in fact hard to overestimate the importance of ECLAC for its region, for the Commission did not bask in its earlier glory but continued to render important services. His delegation commended in particular the systematic approach taken to the region's economic and social issues.

20. It generally agreed with CPC that the programme narrative should be amended to bring it into line with the medium-term plan, and it noted from the ACABQ report (A/54/7) the slight increase of 0.4 per cent under the regular budget and the decline in extrabudgetary resources, which would have a negative impact on technical cooperation activities.

21. Brazil supported the ongoing reform of ECLAC but that process should not be an end in itself. More attention should be given in future to the implementation of the programme of work rather than to the details of the reform.

22. **Mr. Kondo** (Japan) said that his delegation generally supported the proposals for ECLAC and welcomed in particular the efforts to limit the increase of resources by means of redeployment. However, it noted that the proposed reclassification of Local level posts to the Professional category entailed an increase of $389,200 and that other staff costs were set to increase by 10.8 per cent. It would welcome further explanation of the reasons for the double increase. It also noted that travel costs appeared to have increased by some 30 per cent in the current biennium and would welcome information on the current expenditure level under that object.

23. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that her delegation fully supported the recommendations made by CPC on section 19. It wished to emphasize that in no case should the programme of work take second place to the reform process, which must be a tool for greater efficiency in the implementation of the programme. Furthermore, the General Assembly must ensure that technical cooperation projects were not affected in any way by the decline in extrabudgetary resources.

24. Her delegation would welcome information from the Secretariat on the high proportion of locally recruited staff and the increasing recourse to such staff. The Secretariat might also indicate the legislative mandate for the general approach of concentrating on comparative advantages. It was particularly important that subprogramme 2 on regional integration should be implemented in accordance with section 19, paragraph 73 of resolution 52/220 and that it should benefit all the members of the region. In the light of the debate in CPC, the General Assembly should also redefine the expected accomplishments of the programme to bring it into line with the medium-term plan and adapt it as far as possible to ECLAC priorities.

25. Her delegation welcomed the new subprogramme 12 but felt that new resources should be allocated for its implementation so as to avoid any cut in the resources allocated to subprogramme 5.

26 **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that his delegation recognized the value of the work of ECLAC and supported the Secretary-General's budget proposals under section 19. It encouraged ECLAC to persist in its reform efforts. In particular, it could

improve coordination among the United Nations agencies in the region. His delegation believed that the reform should not be an end in itself but a process of continuous improvement.

27. ECLAC should make its contribution to the Summit of the Americas process, especially in the area of free trade, but it should avoid involvement in global economic issues which the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank were better equipped to handle. It should exercise caution in its work on regional trade and the environment, which might duplicate the work being done by the Organization of American States (OAS), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and other agencies.

28. His delegation would like to know the basis for the Advisory Committee's acceptance of the reclassification of Local level posts to the Professional category and what the current vacancy level was.

29. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) said that his delegation supported the work of ECLAC and would welcome information on its interaction with OAS in their joint work in the region.

30. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that there were no pre-set levels within the overall level of resources. In the budget process almost every expectation as to the level for each section tended to be adjusted in the discussions between programme managers. There were of course finite limits to the Secretary-General's budget proposals because he was working within the budget outline adopted at the fifty-third session.

31. The work programme did, indeed, reflect a shift in the balance of resources between subprogrammes, but that shift reflected the review of the work programme by the Commission at its session in May 1998 and the further review made by its ad hoc working group in October 1998. Table 19.7 showed the shifts in resources, which amounted essentially to largish cuts under subprogrammes 1 and 5 and large increases under subprogrammes 7 and 12. Those shifts were due to the transfer of resources between subprogrammes. The reduction under subprogramme 1 reflected the transfer of a transport unit to subprogramme 7; the transfer did not reduce the ECLAC capacity in that area but placed the resources in a programme context which best suited the activities in question. The recurrent outputs provided for in the programme budget for the current biennium were all programmed for the biennium 2000-2001. There was in fact a slight increase in the resources requested under section 19. The reduction of about $600,000 under subprogramme 5 was largely the result of the transfer of resources to the new subprogramme 12, which was regarded as an area of growing importance in the Commission's work.

32. Concerning resource requirements, the reclassification of three Local level posts to P-2, the corresponding resources for which were shown in table 19.2, where there was an increase of $174,700 relating to that reclassification, was justified by the fact that the incumbents were undertaking duties at the Professional level.

33. The increase of $205,900 under other staff costs in the same table related to general temporary assistance to support and operate IMIS. Of that amount, $187,000 related to ensuring that the operation of IMIS would continue smoothly once it was installed in ECLAC during the course of 2000 and that the Commission would be self-sustaining in that area through to the end of 2001. In addition there were two other minor increases for general temporary assistance, both of $9,300, for subprogrammes 5 and 12, shown in tables 19.17 and 19.31, respectively.

34. Regarding the considerable increase in travel for 1998-1999 over 1996-1997 (table 19.2), he pointed out that any comparison between the two bienniums should be made with great care because the biennium 1996-1997 had been far from normal as it had corresponded to a time when the United Nations had been subjected to considerable budgetary constraint. Paragraph 29 of the general introduction to the budget (A/54/6/Rev.1 (Vol. I)) pointed out the unusual circumstances associated with the 1996-1997 expenditures, indicating that they reflected some distortion of norms and did not therefore always constitute an adequate basis for comparison with subsequent provisions. That applied particularly to the travel provisions for ECLAC in the forthcoming biennium, which were expected to be at least as high as the corresponding provision for 1998-1999.

35. With regard to the expected drop in extrabudgetary resources from some $21 million to some $16 million, the reduction was largely due to the fact that major funders such as the Inter-American Development Bank, UNDP, UNFPA and other bodies, currently seemed to be able to provide less funding to

ECLAC. The figures for the forthcoming biennium were, however, a projection and were therefore subject to adjustment.

36. With respect to the vacancy rates which, at the end of April 1999, had been 5.5 per cent for Professional staff and 3.9 per cent for the General Services, he said that recruitment had continued and that the latest figures were 3.3 per cent and 1.9 per cent, respectively. There was therefore no current vacancy problem and in dollar terms the budgetary provision was being spent.

37. The need to implement subprogramme 13 without any selective treatment of countries would certainly be borne in mind by the Executive Secretary of ECLAC.

38. In conclusion, he said that he would provide written answers in informal consultations to other questions that had been raised.

39. **The Chairman** said that she took it that the Committee had completed its first reading of section 19 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations for further consideration.

40. *It was so decided.*

41. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider section 20 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001. In that connection she drew the Committee's attention to the recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Coordination contained in paragraph 333 of its report (A/54/16).

42. **Mr. Jdeia** (Kuwait) said that his delegation attached great importance to section 20; he supported the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China concerning regional cooperation for development. He noted from the report of the Advisory Committee (A/54/7) that IMIS support and maintenance and contractual security arrangements reflected a slight increase in appropriations. He supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation for a redistribution of resources among subprogrammes; that would require greater transparency in the way in which information was submitted. He urged that the priorities set in the medium-term plan for subprogrammes should be of a practical nature and realizable within the biennium.

43. The experience of the other regional commissions should be drawn on for the purpose of synchronizing the intergovernmental meetings with the planning and budgetary preparation cycle of the United Nations.

44. His delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the Office of Human Resources Management should take the necessary proactive steps to deal with the problem of vacancies in ESCWA so as to ensure that it was accorded priority when candidates for transfer were reviewed; it also agreed that the filling of existing vacancies should be expedited by simplifying procedures and providing the necessary support, with due regard for equitable geographical distribution and enhancement of the Commission's capacity for programme implementation.

45. The Commission should be given all possible support in order to ensure the attainment of the highly important objectives for which it had been established.

46. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and wished in that connection to emphasize the importance which it attached to section 20.

47. He noted the high level of vacancies in ESCWA, with 24 vacancies in the Professional category (23.3 per cent) and 10 in the General Service category (7.6 per cent) as at 17 June1999. That could not fail to affect the Commission's performance, and he endorsed the recommendation in paragraph 331 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (A/54/16) that the vacancy rate should be kept under review and measures taken to reduce it.

48. His delegation had learned of an anticipated reduction in the rate of financing from extrabudgetary resources that would make it necessary to rely on regular budget resources. He reaffirmed the importance of supporting ESCWA so as to enable it to discharge its mandate with optimal effectiveness.

49. **Mr. Kondo** (Japan) said that further coordination was necessary in order to avoid any overlapping of programmes with those of other development agencies, particularly in activities of an operational character. For example, under subprogramme 2, paragraph 20.29 dealing with sustainable human development warranted careful review in order to avoid any possible overlap with the activities of UNDP. In the same subprogramme, the activity concerning microcredit facilities and social funds might duplicate activities of UNCTAD as well as other subprogrammes of ESCWA

itself, for example subprogramme 4. Furthermore, the activity described in paragraph 20.45 covered on-farm agricultural evaluation, which obviously required synergy with the activity of FAO. Referring to subprogramme 3 on economic development and global changes, his delegation called on the Commission to ensure close interaction with UNCTAD and WTO.

50. Regarding paragraph 20.4 (c), he asked, referring to subparagraph (ii), why an increase of $221,000 was needed if support for IMIS was at the maintenance level; in connection with subparagraph (iii) he requested additional information concerning the increase of $232,900 for round-the-clock contractual security services for ESCWA premises; concerning subparagraph (iv) he asked for specific details on the increase of $29,800 for specialized services on video and satellite integration; and concerning subparagraph (vii) he asked for a breakdown of the amount of $82,000 relating to the increased costs of supplies and materials.

51. In conclusion, referring to table 20.13, he asked for an explanation of the increase of $93,500 for consultants and experts; that amount seemed very high when compared with the figure of $46,900 for staff travel.

52. **Ms. Silot Bravo** (Cuba) said that her delegation was concerned at the high percentage of vacancies at ESCWA, particularly in the Professional category, and asked for more recent information than was given in the documents together with information on the measures being taken by the Secretariat to reduce the vacancy rate.

53. The way in which the issue of human rights was addressed in paragraph 20.3 (b) appeared not to be entirely consistent with the corresponding passage in the revised medium-term plan. Her delegation had taken note of the development of social indicators (para. 20.3 (d)) for follow-up to the recommendations of international conferences. That matter had been discussed by the General Assembly but, as far as her delegation was aware, no decision on it had been taken. Her delegation therefore wished to know what the status was of the activities related to social indicators described in the paragraph.

54. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that his delegation broadly supported the programmes and activities of ESCWA as detailed in the budget and appreciated the work of the Commission. He asked what the current vacancy rate was. The fact that it had stood at 22 per cent the previous June suggested that expenditure should be lower than budgeted. He also noted that ESCWA planned to obtain feedback from the public at large concerning its home page and he asked what feedback had been received. Given the high vacancy rate, his delegation would be particularly interested to hear the justification for upgrading a data-processing post. Finally, noting that ESCWA had been invited by OIOS to look into the effectiveness of the Technical Cooperation Division and had responded by merging that division with the Programme Planning and Cooperation Unit to form a single division, he asked what savings had resulted from the merger.

55. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) said that the difference in programme support costs between the regional commissions was startling. In ESCWA, for example, 50.5 cents out of every dollar was spent on programme support. He asked the Secretariat to explain why the cost was so high in ESCWA and what accounted for the differences between one regional commission and another.

56. **Mr. Udegbunam** (Nigeria) expressed his delegation's support for the work of ESCWA, particularly subprogramme 2, on improvement of the quality of life. In other regional commissions too few programmes were geared towards improving quality of life and more resources should be devoted to that subprogramme. He noted that in paragraphs 20.36 and 20.45, relating to subprogrammes 3 and 4, respectively, the activities described were geared towards globalization and he wondered whether the apparent duplication was unavoidable and whether the related funds could be merged with those of subprogramme 2.

57. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), replying to questions, said that the vacancy rate at ESCWA at the end of April 1999 had been 22.3 per cent; by the end of September the vacancy rate for Professionals had fallen to 15.5 per cent. That had been achieved by a number of measures, in particular an effort to prepare vacancy announcements before projected vacancies occurred so as to fill posts more quickly. While there was a limit to what such measures could achieve there had been steady progress.

58. Questions had been raised with respect to programme support, in particular concerning the details provided in paragraph 20.63, which had been noted as

an object of particular concern given the overall level of resources. In response, he said that there had been some reorganization so as to put programme support components into each regional commission based on a standard package so that, in each area, the same kinds of functional activities were ensured. That provided a benchmark enabling comparisons to be made across regional divisions. In the case of ESCWA, some units had been moved from the executive direction and management area so that they would form part of the standard package. As a result, there was growth in the area of programme support.

59. The fact that programme support accounted for 50 per cent of total resources had to be seen in context. A large part of the work of the regional commissions concerned support for technical cooperation programmes, and the administrative management of those activities was undertaken within the programme support area. It was therefore not wasted overhead but met basic operational needs. Accordingly, high programme support costs were to be expected. It should also be noted that ESCWA was the smallest of the regional commissions in substantive terms and that there was a certain minimum size for any programme support operation. It therefore represented to a large extent a fixed cost and it was inevitable that, in proportional terms, it should loom somewhat large in a small commission.

60. Some concern had been expressed about the maintenance provision for IMIS. The purpose of the maintenance provision was to make it possible to continue to operate IMIS on a day-to-day basis. That was why there was a provision in paragraph 20.64 for temporary assistance. It was a flexible provision and over time it should become clear what the ongoing requirement for such assistance was now that Release 3 of IMIS had been installed.

61. Concerning the cost of travel, he pointed out that airfares in the region were unusually high: it was one of the most expensive regions in which to buy air tickets and DSA was also high. That was why the related costs were greater than those anticipated in some other regions.

62. He said that he would provide written answers to the detailed questions raised concerning certain objects of expenditure in informal consultations.

63. **The Chairman** said that she took it that the Committee had completed its first reading of section 20 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 and wished to refer that section to informal consultations for further consideration.

64. *It was so decided.*

Section 21. Regular programme of technical cooperation (continued)

65. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider section 21 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001. In that connection she drew attention to the recommendation of the Committee for Programme and Coordination contained in paragraph 341 of its report (A/54/16).

66. **Mr. Barnwell** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that technical cooperation remained central to accelerating the rate of economic growth in developing countries, and greater coordination seemed inevitable in the future. Section 21 reflected the continuing commitment of the developing countries to strengthen national development initiatives so as to achieve effective participation in the international economic system. It was regrettable that ACABQ had transmitted the estimates under section 21 to the General Assembly without offering any technical advice, which was required under rule 157 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly.

67. **Mr. Kondo** (Japan) said that, while his delegation supported the regular programme of technical cooperation, it was not in a position to comment on the section because it was not clear, due to a lack of information, whether there existed duplication or overlapping between the activities carried out under section 21 and similar activities conducted under other sections of the proposed programme budget.

68. **Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It attached great importance to the technical assistance activities under section 21, which made a major contribution to developing countries, in particular through the provision of consultative services and training. Noting that the proposals under section 21 indicated only major areas of activity and relevant secretariat units to be responsible for their implementation, he expressed regret at the lack of precision and transparency, which made it difficult to identify potential duplication of work and overlapping

between activities carried out under section 21 and similar activities conducted under other budget sections. It would have been useful to have had a table indicating the different types of expenditure and the corresponding amounts. Similarly, the technical advice of ACABQ would have assisted delegations in their deliberations on the section.

69. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that her delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and endorsed the views of the representative of Algeria regarding section 21. It was committed to retaining the regular programme of technical cooperation.

70. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) said that, because technical assistance activities under section 21 of the programme budget for 1998-1999 had not been subject to evaluation or scrutiny, it was not clear what outcomes had been achieved through the expenditure of the resources, in excess of $42 million, that had been appropriated during the current biennium. The programme managers should have included information on expected accomplishments in the budget proposals for 2000-2001 as required under the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. His delegation considered that there were no grounds for recosting the programme.

71. **Mr. Chandra** (India) said that the impact on development in developing countries was the key criterion by which the effectiveness and efficiency of the United Nations should be judged. His delegation therefore strongly supported the regular programme of technical cooperation. It noted that, since the scope and composition of the activities under the regular programme were based on the individual requests of Governments, the proposals indicated only major areas of activity. Nevertheless, it was concerned that there had been a significant decline in the resources requested for such crucial areas as international trade in goods and services and commodities. There was also a disparity between allocations for disaster relief and for complex emergencies. There was a need to focus on the core requirements of developing countries, which included assistance to enable them to take advantage of the process of globalization and avoid its inherent risks with a view to promoting their development and enhancing the economic and social position of their citizens.

72. **Mr. Orr** (Canada) asked what the procedures were for Governments that wished to apply for technical assistance, and whether there was a list of countries that had benefited from such assistance.

73. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It was deeply attached to the regular programme of technical cooperation. It valued, in particular, the opportunities for training provided under the programme. He noted with satisfaction that resources were to be made available for the preparation of the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, and expressed support for the planned activities in the area of water resources development and management. Given the importance of the technical assistance activities to be carried out under section 21, it was disappointing that there had been no real growth in the level of resources proposed.

74. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that the activities carried out under the regular programme of technical cooperation were subject to scrutiny. As stated in paragraph 21.11, annual reports on programme implementation were submitted to the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, while budget performance was reported to the General Assembly. A request had been made for recosting in order to maintain the real value of the resources allocated to the programme. Recosting would be consistent with the procedures followed in the case of the budget proposals for the current biennium.

75. While the overall level of resources requested under section 21 was the same as for the current biennium, the distribution of those resources among the various programmes would inevitably remain fluid since the activities undertaken were based on the individual requests of Governments. Accordingly, the figures in table 21.2 were merely indicative. Information on the procedures for applying for technical assistance would be provided in informal consultations.

76. **Mr. Repasch** (United States of America) asked which bodies were responsible for auditing the activities carried out under section 21.

77. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division) said that external and internal audits were conducted by the United Nations Board of Auditors and the Office of Internal Oversight Services respectively.

Section 22. Human rights

Section 23. Protection of and assistance to refugees

Section 24. Palestine refugees

Section 25. Humanitarian assistance

78. **Mr. Mselle** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) introduced the Advisory Committee's report on part VI, comprising sections 22 to 25, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 (A/54/7 (chap. II, part VI)). The estimate under part VI was set at $132.5 million.

79. The comments and recommendations of the Advisory Committee on section 22 were contained in paragraphs VI.2-19 of its report. In its first report on the budget for 1998-1999 the Advisory Committee had recommended that the Commission on Human Rights and its secretariat should review the working methods of its subsidiary machinery and the number and timing of meetings and reports, which had become a source of great concern. It understood that the Commission had started to take some steps to address those concerns. The Advisory Committee requested that further progress should be indicated in the budget proposals for 2002-2003.

80. Seven new posts and a reclassification of a G-6 post to G-7 had been requested. In paragraphs VI.10 to VI.12 the Advisory Committee examined the requirements for the New York Office and recommended acceptance of the posts for that Office except for the additional P-4 post. It also recommended acceptance of the other posts requested by the Secretary-General.

81. The Advisory Committee had again called for measures to streamline reporting to donors of trust funds and other extrabudgetary funds. After due consultation with donors, trust funds which were no longer active should be liquidated as soon as possible. Other matters requiring attention were the identification of resources related to the right to development and the review of the cost-effectiveness of internal versus external printing of certain special materials. The provision of workload indicators for subprogrammes would be useful when the budget proposals were examined. The Advisory Committee trusted that its comments would be addressed in the context of the next budget submission.

82. On sections 23 and 24 he had nothing to add to the comments made in paragraphs VI.20-25 of the ACABQ report.

83. Section 25 was dealt with in paragraphs VI.26-36. In paragraphs VI.27-28 the Advisory Committee recommended approval of the four new posts requested but questioned the redeployment of a P-2 post to the Geneva liaison unit of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

84. The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction would end on 31 December 1999. The Advisory Committee was of the view that the capacity of the United Nations to undertake any follow-up activities should be reviewed before a decision was taken to establish yet another separate bureaucracy for that activity. In paragraphs VI.33-36 it commented on the presentation and structure of section 25 and requested that its views should be taken into account in the preparation of the next estimates under that section. It had reviewed the Secretary-General's report on the future funding from the regular budget of activities related to natural disaster mitigation, preparedness and prevention (A/53/641) and for the reasons stated in paragraph VI.31 it recommended that, should the General Assembly decide to continue the grant to UNDP, its amount should be set at $2.31 million for the biennium 2000-2001.

85. **Mr. Sareva** (Finland) speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and, in addition, Liechtenstein and Norway, on sections 22 to 25 of the proposed programme budget, expressed concern that the resources allocated for the human rights programme remained at less than 2 per cent of the total budget. Despite the proposed increase, the programme was clearly underfunded and would continue to be heavily dependent on extrabudgetary resources. The vacancy rate in the programme was also a cause for concern. He would like to know what measures had been taken by the Office of Human Resources Management, in particular

at the entry level, to shorten the time required to recruit candidates from the roster. It was unacceptable that delays in contacting candidates were sometimes so long that they were no longer available for recruitment.

86. The European Union supported the strengthening of the New York Office of the High Commissioner, given its multiple functions. It also considered that the operating conditions for the human rights treaty bodies, special rapporteurs, special representatives, working groups and field activities needed to be enhanced. The rights of women and girls must be fully integrated into United Nations human rights activities, and there was a need for increased efforts to protect the most vulnerable groups, including disabled persons.

87. The European Union wished to reiterate its strong support for the programmes implemented under sections 23, 24 and 25 of the proposed programme budget. With respect to section 25, it remained concerned at the inadequate level of regular budget resources allocated to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which amounted to less than 1 per cent of the total budget and was far inferior to the level of extrabudgetary resources. That situation was difficult to understand in the light of the ever-increasing demands placed on the United Nations in the area of humanitarian assistance. The European Union attached great importance to the safety and security of humanitarian personnel.

88. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider section 22 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001. In that connection she drew attention to the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination contained in paragraphs 370 and 371 of its report (A/54/16).

89. **Ms. Aragon** (Philippines) said that her delegation supported the human rights programme of the United Nations, which was one of the priority areas of the medium-term plan for 1998-2001. It welcomed the resource growth of 3.7 per cent proposed under section 22 and endorsed the relevant conclusions and recommendations of CPC.

90. It attached particular importance to the activities conducted under subprogramme 1 (Right to development, research and analysis) and was pleased to note that the strengthening of the protection of migrant workers was one of the expected accomplishments under the subprogramme. She trusted that there would be particular focus on the protection of women migrant workers. She expressed satisfaction that one of the continuing objectives of the activities under subprogramme 2 (Supporting human rights bodies and organs) was the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Her delegation would like to receive an update on the status of the Convention and the measures taken by the Secretariat to promote it. It appealed to all States that had not already done so to sign and ratify the Convention.

91. She noted with regret the proposed reduction in resources for subprogramme 3 (Advisory services, technical cooperation, support to human rights fact-finding procedures and field activities) and sought assurance that the advisory services and technical cooperation provided under the subprogramme would not be adversely affected.

92. **Mr. Moktefi** (Algeria) noted that the presentation of the narrative for section 22 was not very clear. What was needed was a breakdown of the specific amounts that were being proposed for specific activities. The inclusion of activities for which no mandates had been given by the General Assembly was another cause for concern; the paragraphs containing the narrative of those activities should be deleted from the programme budget proposals. Other elements of the narrative were not consistent with the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 (A/53/6/Rev.1). Specific reference should have been made to activities related to the right to development, which was an important dimension of human rights, and the necessary resources provided. At the same time his delegation was concerned at the proposed increase in expenses for travel and for the hiring of consultants.

93. **Ms. Sun Minqin** (China) noted that the narrative of section 22 made no reference to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, which should provide the guidelines for the proposals in that section. With regard to paragraph 22.47, it would be useful to know what criteria would be used to select the research and analysis activities to be undertaken. The expected accomplishments for the biennium 2000-2001 included an increase in the number of States parties to the principal treaties and in the number of ratifications. Accession to and ratification of treaties, however, were the prerogative of sovereign States and the subjective anticipation of the exercise of that prerogative was neither necessary nor desirable.

94. Her delegation noted, moreover, that the main objectives of subprogramme 3 (Advisory services, technical cooperation, support to human rights fact-finding procedures and field activities) were to translate international human rights norms into national legislation and practice. The medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, however, did not provide for such activities. It was only at the request of sovereign States that the United Nations could provide such assistance.

95. While the activities proposed under international cooperation and inter-agency coordination and liaison might be disguised as concern for the protection of human rights, they in fact constituted interference in the internal affairs of developing countries, which were being deprived of their right to development.

96. With regard to other substantive activities, it would be useful to know how the Secretariat defined the term "human rights indicators", which it had employed in paragraph 22.49 (b) (iii) of the programme narrative and whether there was any legislative mandate in the medium-term plan for the preparation of a consolidated list of such indicators.

97. Lastly, her delegation shared the Advisory Committee's view that the request for an additional new P-4 post for the preparation of briefing papers and submissions to the executive committees was not justified, particularly at a time when efforts were being made to reduce costs in other areas.

98. **Mr. Ekorong A Ndong** (Cameroon) said that the Committee should in general support initiatives designed to introduce a culture of human rights in developing countries. The limited increase in the resources proposed for section 22 did not reflect the importance of human rights activities, to which the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 had accorded priority. His delegation hoped that the resources would be made available to implement the General Assembly's decision to establish a subregional human rights centre for Central Africa.

99. **Ms. Johnson** (Canada) said that, given the importance of the Organization's human rights activities, the resources allocated to section 22 were relatively modest and represented less than half the amount which had been proposed for the Organization's travel budget. Her delegation supported the request for additional resources for the New York Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, which would help to ensure that the promotion of human rights went hand in hand with the maintenance of international peace and security.

100. **Mr. Park Hae-yun** (Republic of Korea) welcomed the modest increases in resources which had been proposed for subprogrammes 1 and 2, even though the allocation proposed for human rights activities represented less than 2 per cent of the overall budget proposal and was not sufficient to implement mandated activities. While his delegation supported the proposal for the funding of seven additional posts, it remained concerned at the high vacancy rate and urged the Secretariat to speed up the recruitment process.

101. **Ms. Buergo Rodríguez** (Cuba) said that her delegation had concerns about the mandates which had been included in section 22 and at the narrative for the section. The medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 contained no mandate for several of the activities included in the section. She would welcome information, for example, on the mandate on which the Secretary-General had based his proposal for the preparation of a consolidated list of human rights indicators. Under subprogramme 1, it was not clear whether any mandates existed for the preparation of two reports on forensic science and two on minimum humanitarian standards. Reference had also been made to the provision of assistance to special rapporteurs. She wished to know how many special rapporteurs were proposed for each country and what thematic areas they would cover. Lastly, her delegation was concerned at the lack of information about the distribution of resources among the various subprogrammes.

102. **Mr. Odaga-Jalomayo** (Uganda), said that, given Uganda's own recent history, his delegation was sympathetic to the proposals contained in section 22 of the proposed programme budget. It remained concerned, however, at the high vacancy rate and at reports that sufficient account had not been taken of the need for broad geographical representation in the recruitment of staff for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. He would welcome clarification of those two issues by the Secretariat.

103. His delegation also attached great importance to the right to development and was therefore concerned that the resources allocated to the implementation of that right had not been clearly identified in the budget proposals. Information concerning the criteria for the establishment of field offices was also lacking. Lastly,

his delegation would welcome information on the savings that had been achieved through recourse to external printing services and on the efforts that had been made to strengthen printing capacity at the United Nations Office at Geneva.

104. **Mr. Tabb** (United States of America) said his delegation supported the Secretary-General's proposals under section 22 and was pleased to note that they addressed the central role of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in enhancing cooperation in the field of human rights. The proposals reflected the level of resources required to fulfil the mandates given by the General Assembly and other bodies and to service the increased workloads of treaty bodies. The overall approach was also consistent with programme 19 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.

105. His delegation would nevertheless like to see more specific indicators listed under expected accomplishments. It also sought clarification of the basis for the apparent over-budgeting for the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus. In addition, it wished to know what the current vacancy rates were under section 22 of the proposed programme budget.

106. **Mr. Udegbunam** (Nigeria) said that, in the light of Nigeria's recent history, during which the country had been held hostage by a regime that had had no regard for human rights, his delegation supported the proposed allocations for human rights activities. It also endorsed the Advisory Committee's views on the steps that should be taken to avoid duplication. The advisory services and technical cooperation activities by virtue of which developing countries were given assistance in preparing the reports requested by human rights treaty bodies played an important role and more funds should be allocated to such activities. Staffing levels for the subprogramme were inadequate in light of the heavy workload involved. Any expenditure on human rights was money well spent.

107. **Mr. Kondo** (Japan) said that the level of resources allocated to section 22 was appropriate and reflected the relevant resolutions and decisions of the legislative bodies. The distribution of resources among the various subprogrammes was also appropriate. The High Commissioner for Human Rights should seek to enhance coordination and cooperation among all United Nations bodies and specialized agencies for the promotion and protection of human rights.

108. With regard to the provision of $112,000 for honoraria payable to the members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, reflecting the enlargement of the Committee's membership from 10 to 18, the provision in question should appear as a surplus if the amendment to the Convention on the Rights of the Child which provided for the enlargement of the Committee's membership did not come into force during the biennium 2000-2001.

109. **Mr. Sach** (Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division), replying to the questions and concerns of members, assured the Committee that the level of activities in the field of advisory services and technical cooperation would not be adversely affected by the proposed reduction in subprogramme 3 under section 22. The reduction in resources reflected the reduced level of activities carried out in Rwanda under the subprogramme.

110. Concerning the vacancy rate situation, the vacancy rate for the Professional category had been 15.7 per cent at the end of April 1999 and 6.7 per cent at the end of September, while the corresponding rates for the General Service category had been 17.3 per cent and 5.8 per cent, respectively.

111. On the larger issue of the programme of work under section 22 and whether it was in conformity with the provisions of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 and related mandates, CPC had approved the programme narrative of the section, subject to seven modifications. The issue of the preparation of a consolidated list of human rights indicators had been one isolated area on which there had not been total agreement. Programme 19 of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 provided for the identification of indicators showing success in respecting economic, social and cultural rights. CPC had had difficulty with that part of the narrative and had recommended that the Assembly should carefully consider paragraph 22.49 (b) (iii) of the proposed programme budget, bearing in mind the ongoing consideration of the issues contained in that paragraph. The principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (Paris Principles), which the General Assembly had adopted in its resolution 48/134, were the formal basis for the reference in the narrative to national structures for the promotion and protection of human rights.

112. In certain budget sections procedures with regard to perennials and the provision of resources without mandates had been followed since the mid-1980s. Those arrangements had been adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-first session (resolution 41/213) and reviewed at the fifty-third session by the Advisory Committee. The Assembly had not thus far acted on the Advisory Committee's report and the Secretariat therefore took it that the arrangements in question were still in place and governed the provisions in section 22 relating to rapporteurs and other elements. It was not known at the time of preparation of the budget which themes or countries would have activities. The practice had therefore been to maintain a level of resources from one programme budget to the other based on the level of the previous biennium.

113. With regard to over-budgeting for the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, the provisions in question reflected optimism about the progress that could be made on the issue. Unfortunately, such optimism had not been rewarded in the past and there had been a pattern of resources being underspent by the time the Secretariat reported on each section of the budget.

114. **Mr. Chandra** (India), looking ahead to section 25 (Humanitarian assistance) said that the funding proposals under that critical section should be consistent with the relevant decisions of the General Assembly. The proposed 9.6 per cent increase in resources reflected the growing need for humanitarian assistance.

115. His delegation did not share the Secretary-General's view that the humanitarian response of the United Nations system should be properly integrated with political and peacekeeping initiatives. In its view, it was important to maintain the distinctions between humanitarian assistance and other aspects of the Organization's work. Paragraph 25.17 of the proposed programme budget should therefore be amended to reflect the separate nature of the two activities. His delegation would also welcome an explanation of the term "technological emergencies", to which reference was made in the same paragraph.

116. If humanitarian assistance was used as a tool for the achievement of political ends, it would be perceived as biased and become part of the problem rather than part of the solution. The subprogramme should therefore not focus on the strategic coordination of humanitarian assistance with political strategy and human rights objectives, as proposed in paragraph 25.22. His delegation could also not support the policy development outputs outlined in paragraph 25.24 (b) (ii) (d) concerning the production of strategy papers on such coordination. More discussion in the competent forums was also needed on the concept of "incipient complex emergencies" before it could be accepted in the Fifth Committee.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.